

# Ad Hoc Alliance for Public Access to 911

---

Alliance for Technology Access•Arizona Consumers League•National Consumers League•World Institute on Disability•National Emergency Number Association-California Chapter•Crime Victims United•Justice for Murder Victims•California Cellular Phone Owners Association•Florida Consumer Fraud Watch•Center for Public Interest Law•Consumer Action•Consumer Coalition of California•Consumers First•California Alliance for Consumer Protection•Californians Against Regulatory Excess•The Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ•Utility Consumer Action Network•Children's Advocacy Institute

**RECEIVED****MAR 27 1998****FCC MAIL ROOM**

March 18, 1998

Magalie R. Salas  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20554-0001

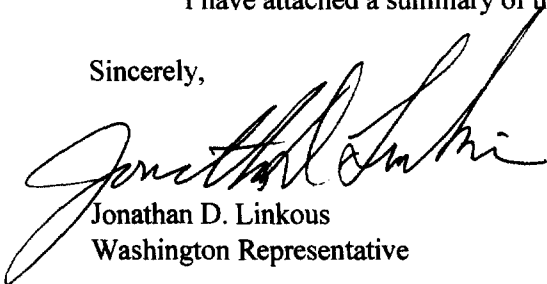
re: *Ex Parte* Meeting  
CC Docket 94-102, Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced  
911 Emergency Calling Systems

Dear Ms. Salas:

On March 17, 1998 Carl Hilliard, Sharon Hilliard, Jon Linkous, Ermilia Lechuga, Edgar Lechuga, Jim Conran, representing the Ad Hoc Alliance, met with Commissioners Michael Powell and Gloria Tristani and David Sidell from Commissioner Ness's office regarding the above referenced docket.

I have attached a summary of the discussion points used by the Alliance during the meeting.

Sincerely,



Jonathan D. Linkous  
Washington Representative

enclosure

No. of Copies rec'd  
List A B C D E

OH

RECEIVED

MAR 27 1998

FCC MAIL ROOM

**THE ALLIANCE FOR  
PUBLIC ACCESS TO 911**

***REPORT CONCERNING THE  
FAILURE TO CONNECT  
EMERGENCY CALLS  
MADE FROM MRS. LECHUGA'S  
AIRTOUCH CELLULAR PHONE  
ON NOVEMBER 29, 1997***

**February 1998**

Joseph Lechuga, his wife Dolores and their two small children, Joseph age six and Jeremy age four, spent last Thanksgiving with his sister and her family in Victorville, California. On November 28, 1997, at about 4:00 p.m., Joseph and his family left Victorville to return to their home in Highland Park, California. Their route of travel took them onto the Angeles Crest Highway through the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County. It appears that their vehicle hit a patch of ice on a curve on this highway and, as a result, the vehicle went over the edge of the road. (That portion of the Angeles Crest Highway was closed for the winter the following morning). The vehicle traveled down a steep bank and landed upside down at a point approximately one hundred and thirty (130) feet from the edge of the highway. Mr. Lechuga died of the injuries he sustained in the accident, the two small Lechuga children froze to death and Ms. Lechuga either froze to death or was killed by wild animals. (Copies of newspaper accounts of the accident are attached hereto as Appendix "1").

#### **Attempts to call for help from the Lechuga cellular telephone.**

Dolores Lechuga subscribed to cellular telephone service from Airtouch in Los Angeles, California. Airtouch is a "B" side cellular carrier. Ms. Lechuga had her cellular telephone with her at the time of the accident. This cellular phone is described as a hand held Motorola flip phone (ESN Hd4276ec1 - D21202584257). This phone has not yet been recovered. Six calls for help were attempted from this cellular phone the day after the accident starting at 1:09 p.m. The last attempt was at 1:20 p.m. In each instance the calling information reached a cell site. (Attached as Appendix "2" hereto is a copy of a print out which shows the calling information received from the Lechuga cellular phone by the Fresno MSA Limited Partnership cell site near California City). However, as the information in Appendix 2 also shows, *none of these calls* were connected and what the caller heard was "dead air." The Alliance's tests demonstrate that a 911 (or "1-911") call made from Ms. Lechuga's cellular phone could have been completed had such call been routed to the 911 dispatcher by means of the strongest available cellular signal in the area.

#### **The nation's cellular telephone systems were not designed for use with hand held portable cellular telephones.**

Cellular systems were designed to communicate with three (3) watt cellular phones, which are installed in a vehicle, run by its car battery, and connected to a hi-gain twelve (12) inch antenna mounted on the car's roof (such 3 watt phones are referred to as "mobile cellular phones"). Despite this fact, approximately ninety five percent (95%) of the cellular phones currently in use throughout the U.S. are hand-held units which operate at six hundred (600) milliwatts, powered by a small battery, and connected to a short stub or pull out five (5) inch antenna (these phones are referred to as "hand held portable cellular phones"). A mobile cellular phone is approximately five (5) times more powerful than a hand-held portable cellular phone.

Attached as Appendix "3" hereto is a copy of a typical cellular system coverage map, which appeared in an advertisement published in the trade magazine Global Wireless

News, in its January/February 1998 issue. This map illustrates the difference in actual coverage that is afforded to mobile cellular telephones as compared and contrasted to the actual coverage for hand-held portable cellular telephones.

**Description of the problem faced by the consumer who is using a hand-held portable cellular telephone and, specifically, the user of the Lechuga cellular telephone.**

When a cellular call is initiated by pressing the "send" button on the cellular phone, three "words" are digitally transmitted from the phone to the cell site. The first word is the number of the cellular phone, the second is the area code of the phone and its electronic serial number, and the third word is the number dialed. These words are sent five (5) times over a dedicated cellular control channel, using a wide-band data format with error correction capability. The cell site uses this error correction capacity to restore any digits lost during transmission. After the words have been received, the cell site sends out a wide-band signal that instructs the cellular telephone to tune to a particular voice channel. (This is shown in Appendix "2" as "IRDO"="Initial Radio"). The cell site then sends a tone (known as the "Supervisory Audio Tone") on that channel and waits for a "handshake" tone from the cellular telephone. The bandwidth assigned to this tone is much narrower (2 kHz) than the wide bandwidth assigned to the wide-band digital transmission of the words used to initiate the call (30 kHz). Thus, the chances of successfully completing this "handshake" are significantly reduced. During this process the earpiece of the cellular telephone is muted, so that the user hears nothing but dead air. When the cell site receives the handshake tone, a voice connection is made and communication can take place.

We know from the information set forth in the printout attached as Appendix "2" that the handshake signal from Ms. Lechuga's hand-held cellular telephone was never heard by the cell site. (The combination of the structure code and the DCS information demonstrates that this is what occurred). We also know that the signal strength of the words was very weak and that, as a result, *no voice communication was possible* from a hand-held portable cellular telephone on the "B" side. (See Appendix "2," "RSIND" = "Received Signal Indication"). Nevertheless, Ms. Lechuga's hand-held portable cellular telephone would have indicated to her that the phone was "in service" and it would *not have switched* to the other cellular system, the "A" side system, where voice communications could have taken place. (It would not have switched under any circumstances if programmed to use the "B" side only. Cellular carriers frequently program cellular phones to *only work on the side used by their cellular system*).

**Description of the tests conducted by the Alliance at the site of the Lechuga accident.**

In December 1997, a test was conducted from the Angeles Crest Highway at a point immediately above the Lechuga accident site. (The Angeles Crest Highway and U.S. forest in the immediate area were closed at this time and the site itself was not accessible). A Motorola three (3) watt mobile cellular telephone and an Oki six hundred

(600) milliwatt hand-held portable cellular phones were used in this test. Both cellular telephones indicated at they were "in service" on both the "A" side and the "B" side cellular systems. The carriers providing this "in service" signal level (based on SID identification) for the "A" side was Kern County Cellular Holdings and for the "B" side was Fresno MSA Limited Partnership. The measured signal strength of the signal from the "A" side was 20% stronger than the signal strength from the "B" side.

Set forth in Appendix "4" hereto are pictures of the place where the Lechuga vehicle left the road and where it came to rest. Also, included is a picture looking up from a point approximately one twelve hundred (1,200) meters below the accident site. (This photograph was taken near the South Fork Campground). As these pictures show, the area is covered with tall pine trees that are well spaced apart from each other. There is a clear line of sight from the roadway to the Antelope Valley desert floor below. It appears that this line of sight was unobstructed from the point where the Lechuga vehicle came to rest. In checking the signal strength of Fresno MSA Limited Partnership, the road was walked with the Oki hand-held portable cellular telephone to a point where the pine trees partially obstructed the line of sight. The hand set signal strength meter flickered at this point between "in service" and "out of service" on the "B" side but remained "in service" on the "A" side (showing one bar out of three).

**Had the Lechuga cellular telephone been equipped to automatically select the strongest compatible signal when 911 is dialed, the emergency calls would have gone through.**

The coverage map for a typical cellular system shown in Appendix 3 is useful to illustrate the problem. At the point where the Lechuga accident occurred, the signal from "B" side carrier is in a "yellow" zone that provides service to mobile cellular telephones but not hand-held portable cellular telephones. Thus, communications were possible from a mobile telephone but not from a hand-held portable cellular phone. Had the Lechuga cellular phone been located in a no signal "green" zone *and* been programmed to switch to the other carrier, it is reasonable to assume that the emergency calls would have been connected. However, because there was a signal from the "B" carrier sufficient to provide service to a mobile cellular phone, the hand-held portable phone would not switch to the "A" side's cellular system even though communication was not possible on the "B" side's system. This is due to the inherent design of cellular systems which are intended to communicate with a mobile telephone which is five times more powerful than the hand-held portable cellular phone. Modifying the hand-held portable cellular phone to be "out of service" unless it receives a higher level of signal strength from the cellular system is not a solution because the "Down-Link" signal from the cell site and the "Up-Link" signal from the hand-held portable phone will be balanced in those cell sites that provide "Portable-Grade" service in various parts of a cellular system's coverage areas. e.g. "core" cell site such as those sites found in downtown areas and other well-trafficked business districts.

In testing the area surrounding the Lechuga's accident, calls were successfully placed from the Motorola mobile telephone at the test site over both the "A" and the "B" side cellular systems. Calls were also successfully placed over the Oki handheld portable cell phone on the "A" side from the test site to 911 and a very clear channel of communication was established with the 911 operator in Bakersfield, California. This indicates that the coverage from the "A" side carrier was in the "red" zone for service to hand-held portable cellular telephones. Thus, had the Lechuga cellular phone been able to access the "A" side carrier's system, it is safe to say that all of the six (6) emergency calls from that phone would have been completed.

**The nearby "B" side cellular system did not provide coverage to the mountain area where the accident occurred.**

Attached as Appendix "5" hereto are maps showing the location where the accident occurred and the line of sight from the location of the accident to the cellular sites in the area. The elevation at this point is approximately twenty two-hundred (2,200) meters. At the lower South Fork Campground location (approximately 1,000 meters), a strong signal was received on the "B" side from Airtouch cell site in Lancaster, California, which is located approximately fifteen (15) miles from the accident site. The reason why the Lechuga cellular phone was unable to access the nearby cellular system is due to the antenna pattern used by Airtouch. (See Appendix "6"). This antenna pattern is designed to put as much energy in a horizontal plane as possible. (Other antenna patterns are available which would provide a signal in a more vertical plane and it appears that the Angeles Crest Highway could be covered by the Airtouch cellular system with such an antenna pattern). Cellular service is generally available throughout the Antelope Valley floor from local cellular carriers up to an elevation of about 1,000 meters. As one travels north across the Antelope Valley, the Tehachpi mountain range rises in elevation. The cell site reached by the Lechuga hand held cellular phone is located in California City, approximately fifty (50) miles away, and is operated by the Fresno MSA Limited Partnership. The approximate elevation of this cell site is twenty three hundred and seventy five (2,375) meters and there is a clear line of sight from this cell site to the accident location.

The Fresno MSA Limited Partnership cellular system also uses a horizontal antenna pattern. If one were to draw the two actual areas of coverage from the lower elevation Airtouch cellular system and higher elevation Fresno MSA Limited Partnership cellular system, across the Antelope Valley, it would look like a two-layer cake. The top layer from Fresno MSA Limited Partnership provides *mobile cellular telephone service* to the Angeles Crest Highway where the Lechuga accident occurred. However, the top layer from the "A" side cellular carrier, Kern County Cellular Holdings system, provides *hand held portable cellular telephone service* to the same area. Thus, since neither "B" side carrier provided portable grade service to the Lechuga accident site, the only means of communication from the Lechuga cellular telephone was over the "A" side cellular system.

### **Blaming the victim.**

The newspaper articles about the accident have blamed the user of the Lechuga cellular phone for the phone's failure to connect to 911. These articles erroneously indicated that one of the calls, intended for Mr. Lechuga's sister in Victorville, but with a number transposition in the area code, was completed to a hospital in Georgia, i.e. the cellular system was not at fault. We know from the information shown in Appendix "2" that this statement is *not correct*. These news articles also say that the reason the call to 911 was not completed is that the caller mistakenly dialed "1-911." The fact that 1-911 was dialed is learned from the same document that shows that no calls were completed because of the weak signal level. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the person or persons who provided this false information to the police authorities and the source of the false information, which stated that the call did not go through because the caller dialed 1-911, knew, in fact, that the actual reason that call did not go through was because Ms. Lechuga's portable hand held cellular phone *was not able to access* the "B" side cellular system even though her phone was showing that it was "*in service*". Needless to say, the false finger pointing at one of the deceased family members as the cause of the failure to reach 911 has greatly contributed to the upset and grief of the surviving members of the family.

### **Blocking 911 calls.**

There is no reason why a call to "1-911" should not go through in any event. 911 is not an area code and 1-911 should be clearly and easily recognized as an emergency call by any cellular system. Consumers are instructed that it is necessary to dial "1" when they are roaming out of the service area of their home carrier. It is logical to assume that many consumers would do so in emergency situations. Despite these facts, we found that the Fresno MSA Limited Partnership was indeed *blocking* calls made to 1-911 while the Kern County Cellular Holdings cellular system was *connecting* those same calls. We know from the information set forth in Appendix 2 that the dialed number information is recorded at the mobile telephone switching office even if that call is not completed. Thus, we can safely assume that Fresno MSA Limited Partnership knows that dialing 1-911 is a common mistake and the blocking of these calls is intentional. We checked other systems in Atlanta and Tampa and found that Bell South and GTE were also blocking 1-911 calls. We went on to determine that calls to \*-911 and #-911 (emergency prefixes in other parts of the country) were also being blocked.

### **Conclusion.**

This tragic accident is another illustration of the life saving potential of the Alliance's two year-old proposal before the Federal Communications Commission that all cellular telephones be equipped to automatically select the strongest compatible signal when 911 is dialed. Had the Lechuga cellular telephone been equipped with this strongest

signal feature, the emergency call made to 911 (or 1-911) would have been completed, thus there is the substantial likelihood that lives would have been saved as a result.





## **INDEX**

### **APPENDIX**

- 1** Newspaper articles about the accident and the Lechuga family.
- 2** Copy of cell site print out of attempted calls from Ms. Lechuga's cellular phone following the accident.
- 3** Typical cellular coverage map, published in an advertisement in Global Wireless Magazine, January/February 1998 issue.
- 4** Photographs of the accident scene.
- 5** Copies of maps showing the location of the accident and the cell site which received the calls from the Lechuga cellular phone after the accident.
- 6** Diagrams of cell site antenna patterns.



# Mystery Magnifies Grief in Family's Death

■ **edy:** Calls from victims' cellular phone brought no help, relatives say.

By MATEA GOLD  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The truck had skidded down a snowy embankment from the winding highway above, crashing and tumbling down the cliff before coming to rest on its roof, 300 feet below.

At least one person was still alive in the cold stillness. And the only lifeline in that freezing, isolated ravine was the family's cellular telephone.

Five calls went out from the icy forest, relatives said. Two were unsuccessful attempts to reach relatives. Two more were to directory assistance.

The final number dialed was 911.

But for reasons still unknown, that call also failed to bring help. And by then, it may have been too late.

When the Lechuga family failed to return to their Highland Park home after spending Thanksgiving in Victorville, relatives knew something was wrong.

They began searching everywhere—the desert roads of the Mojave, the hills north of Los Angeles—dogged by a single question: How could an entire family disappear?



Please see **FAMILY, A32**

Dolores and Joseph Lechuga with their two sons.

**A32**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1997 ★

LOS ANGELES TIMES

## FAMILY

Continued from A1

Jose Lechuga's brothers and sisters made fliers with pictures of the family, plastered them on the backs of their cars and handed them out as they drove around Southern California. During the last week, about 100 family members piled into 15 cars to scour the route from Victorville to Los Angeles.

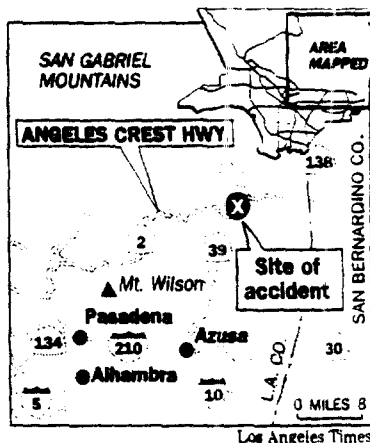
Their agonizing search turned into a frantic, frustrating endeavor with a few tantalizing clues. A hotel owner said he saw the missing family at a gas station in the town of Mojave. As one of their last acts, the Lechugas helped a Victorville family fix a flat tire on Angeles Crest Highway the day after Thanksgiving.

The failed phone calls, the most haunting clues of all, surfaced last Friday. Relatives said Victorville police investigators had tracked five calls made on Dolores Lechuga's cellular phone the afternoon of Nov. 29, the day after the family disappeared.

Although relatives said they had been shown the telephone records, Victorville police would not comment on the calls.

And the family is left with questions swirling about the tragedy, wondering why the calls were not successful.

Their worst fears were confirmed Tuesday afternoon. A sheriff's search and rescue team saw Jose Lechuga's blue truck at the



bottom of the ravine in Angeles National Forest, battered after its slide down the cliff.

The bodies of his sons, Joseph, 6, and Jeremy, 4, were found in the cab. The remains of Jose, 34, were beneath the bed of the truck. A set of footprints led away to the body of his wife, Dolores, 44, crumpled on the steep snow-covered ground 150 feet away.

California Highway Patrol officials, who are investigating the accident, said it is unclear why the truck went off the curving road, a treacherous stretch of highway that is often closed in winter.

The tightknit clan that immigrated from Chihuahua, Mexico, gathered Wednesday in Highland Park to mourn the wrenching end to their search.

"They were so close, so loving, that I guess that's why they were taken together," sobbed Alma Lechuga, 38. Jose's sister-in-law.

"They could never be apart."

Jose and Dolores, who met at a neighbor's party in Highland Park, had been married 13 years and lived in a small house a few blocks from other family members. The youngest son of eight children, Jose had immigrated to the United States in 1977. His wife was born and raised in Highland Park.

Jose, a carpet installer, and Dolores, a homemaker, adored their two sons, whom relatives remembered as talkative and loving. The family would often take outings in Jose's motorboat and go camping in the mountains.

Joseph, a precocious kindergartner at Yorkdale Elementary School, wanted to be in television commercials. Jeremy wanted to do everything his older brother did.

The two boys often performed for the family. Joseph would dance to the song "Stayin' Alive" and pretend to play the guitar while his younger brother would eagerly imitate him.

"Can you believe it?" cried Hortensia Quiroz, Jose's sister. "Those sweet, loving boys are gone."

The family's Thanksgiving at the house of Jose's sister Ermilla in Victorville was an especially festive one. There was a birthday celebration for Jeremy, who had just turned 4 several days earlier. Jose called Mexico to talk to his father, whom he had not seen in 17 years, and decided he wanted to visit him.

The Lechugas headed back to Los Angeles about 4 p.m. Nov. 28.

Please see **FAMILY, A33**

---

## FAMILY: Grief

**Continued from A32**

the day after Thanksgiving. Instead of taking their usual route down Interstate 15 into the basin, they headed across the winding Angeles Crest Highway that cuts through the San Gabriel Mountains. "He had never driven that road before," Quiroz said. "I can only think that they wanted to show the kids the snow."

At 5:30 p.m., the Lechugas stopped on the highway to help a Victorville family with a flat tire, relatives discovered later.

That was the last time they were seen.

When Jose didn't show up for work Saturday, his brother and co-worker Manuel Lechuga became worried and alerted relatives. They began frantically calling others in the extended family in Arizona, the Napa Valley and Mexico, daring to believe that the family had perhaps taken a trip without telling anyone.

"We just kept hoping they would show up," Quiroz said. "I can't believe they're gone. They were a part of us. We are just left with so many memories."

In the midst of their grief, family members said they are angry that the Los Angeles Police Department ignored their initial pleas for help when the Lechugas did not arrive home.

Relatives said that they tried to report the family's disappearance Dec. 4 but that an LAPD officer refused to take a report and told them to inform authorities in Victorville. The case was transferred Monday to the department's missing persons unit.

"We're angry because they didn't help us," said Edgar Lechuga, 18, a cousin. "If they started looking earlier, maybe they would have been saved."

Los Angeles Police Chief Bernard C. Parks has ordered an internal investigation into the family's complaint, said department spokesman Lt. Anthony Alba.

Relatives now say they wish they had known where to look.

"I just wish they could have known how hard we tried to find them," said Edgar Lechuga. "I wish they could have seen how far we went to bring them back."

---

gone. And except for a tunnel of light, the barn was lost too.

"You see that bulldozer there?" said Channel Islands National Park Supt. Tim Setnicka, pointing to a piece of yellow machinery in the middle of a stream bed. "The barn used to surround it. The bulldozer is there. The barn is not."

Only the two-story adobe stands tall, but the storm brought 4 feet of water and muck inside the century-old building.

Once envisioned as the centerpiece for tourism on the island, Scorpion Ranch lies in tatters in the aftermath of an El Niño-driven storm that dumped more than 11 inches of rain Friday.

"The historical fabric of Scorpion Ranch has been damaged and may have been lost forever," Setnicka said.

On Wednesday, Setnicka toured the ranch to assess the damage, and lay plans for what could be a \$1-million restoration plan.

Slogging through mud, pointing out high-water marks inside buildings and lamenting those structures washed to sea, Setnicka referred to the ranch as a "war zone."

Caught behind a berm near the ocean's edge, the runoff lifted the bunkhouse and floated it

Park service Firefighter Rick Rataj removes mud from ground floor of ranch adobe.

downstream, Setnicka said. "It was not enough to make it a beach house. But it's pretty darn close."

Santa Cruz Island has been part of the five-island park since its creation in 1980, but ranchers continued to use its eastern end until last year.

That is when Congress seized the 6,300-acre ranch, intent on restoring the historic buildings and the environment there.

Setnicka said the ranchers' land-use practices—allowing herds of sheep to graze on the land—exacerbated the erosion and the damage to the buildings.

But a ranch manager who worked on the island  
Please see RANCH, B4

revived from bankruptcy Wednesday by a woman who hopes to restore the final resting place of movie stars to its former splendor.

A federal bankruptcy judge approved the sale of the 98-year-old cemetery to Hollywood mortuary operator Eileen Callanan for \$375,000.

That price is far below the estimated \$3 million that some have said the Santa Monica Boulevard facility is worth. It is also far less than the \$2.6 million that one cemetery creditor is owed, and below the \$500,000 minimum bid sought for the property a month ago in a bankruptcy auction.

A Northern California buyer offered \$275,000 for the memorial park Nov. 12. But the sale unraveled as details were being worked out and the buyer discovered hidden costs.

The park's previous owner, the Hollywood Cemetery Assn., declared bankruptcy April 1 amid allegations of fiscal improprieties.

Wednesday's purchase plan is contingent on Callanan's review of the cemetery grounds and its books. The sale will be finalized in mid-January, bankruptcy Judge Thomas B. Donovan was assured by a parade of lawyers and the memorial park's court-appointed trustee.

Donovan scheduled a Dec. 29 hearing to determine whether Callanan is satisfied with the property and with office records that detail such things as the number of remaining plots that can be sold and the endowment fund. If she is, the sale will conclude and authorities will terminate cemetery abandonment.  
Please see CEMETERY, B4

## Mystery Magnifies Grief in Family's Death

**Tragedy:** Calls from victims' cellular phone brought no help, relatives say.

By MATEA GOLD  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The truck had skidded down a snowy embankment from the winding highway above before coming to rest upside down, 300 feet below.

At least one person was still alive in the cold stillness. And the only lifeline in that freezing, isolated ravine was the family's cellular telephone.

Five calls went out from the icy forest, relatives said. Two were unsuccessful attempts to reach

relatives. Two more were to directory assistance.

The final number dialed was 911.

But for reasons still unknown, that call also failed to bring help. And by then, it may have been too late.

When the Lechuga family failed to return to its Highland Park home after spending Thanksgiving in Victorville, relatives knew something was wrong.

They began searching everywhere—the desert roads of the Mojave, the hills north of Los Angeles—dogged by a single question: How could an entire family disappear?

Jose Lechuga's brothers and sisters made fliers with pictures of the family, plastered them on the backs of their cars and handed

them out as they drove around Southern California. During the last week, about 100 family members piled into 15 cars to scour the route from Victorville to Los Angeles.

Their agonizing search turned into a frantic, frustrating endeavor with a few tantalizing clues. A hotel owner said he saw the missing family at a gas station in the town of Mojave. As one of their last acts, the Lechugas helped a Victorville family fix a flat tire on Angeles Crest Highway the day after Thanksgiving.

The failed phone calls, the most haunting clues of all, surfaced last Friday. Relatives said Victorville police investigators had tracked five calls made on Dolores Lechuga's cellular phone the afternoon of Nov. 29, the day after

the family disappeared.

Although relatives said they had been shown the telephone records, Victorville police would not comment on the calls.

And the family is left with questions swirling about the tragedy, wondering why the calls were not successful.

Their worst fears were confirmed Tuesday afternoon. A sheriff's search and rescue team saw Jose Lechuga's blue truck at the bottom of the ravine in the Angeles National Forest, battered after its slide down the cliff.

The bodies of his sons, Joseph, 6, and Jeremy, 4, were found in the cab. The remains of Jose, 34, were beneath the bed of the truck. A set of footprints led away to the

Please see FAMILY, B4

there anymore.

The damage at Scorpion Ranch

Monday, and Setnicka said it is too soon to say when it will be in full

the native vegetation that could have kept the soil intact and

Every farmer will tell you when the forecast says a lot of rain, you

"But now they're never going to see what I saw."

# FAMILY: Calls From Cellular Phone Went Unanswered

Continued from B1

body of his wife, Dolores, 44, crumpled on the steep snow-covered ground 150 feet away.

California Highway Patrol officials, who are investigating the accident, said it is unclear why the truck went off the curving road, a treacherous stretch of highway that is often closed in winter.

The tightknit clan that immigrated from Chihuahua, Mexico, gathered Wednesday in Highland Park to mourn the wrenching end to their search.

"They were so close, so loving, that I guess that's why they were taken together," sobbed Alma Lechuga, 38, Jose's sister-in-law. "They could never be apart."

Jose and Dolores, who met at a neighbor's party in Highland Park, had been married 13 years and lived in a small house a few blocks from other family members. The youngest son of eight children, Jose had immigrated to the United States in 1977. His wife was born and raised in Highland Park.

Jose, a carpet installer, and Dolores, a homemaker, adored their two sons, whom relatives remembered as talkative and loving. The family would often take outings in Jose's motorboat and go camping in the mountains.

Joseph, a precocious kindergartner at Yorkdale Elementary School, wanted to be in television commercials. Jeremy wanted to do everything his older brother did.

The two boys often performed for the family. Joseph would dance



Shown in Lechuga family photograph taken in 1996 are, from bottom left, Joseph, 6, Dolores, Jose, and Jeremy, 4, all killed in accident.

to the song "Stayin' Alive" and pretend to play the guitar while his younger brother would eagerly imitate him.

"Can you believe it?" cried Hortensia Quiroz, Jose's sister. "Those sweet, loving boys are gone."

The family's Thanksgiving at the house of Jose's sister Ermilla in Victorville was an especially festive one. There was a birthday celebration for Jeremy, who had just turned 4 several days earlier. Jose called Mexico to talk to his father, whom he had not seen in 17 years, and decided he wanted to go back and visit him.

The Lechugas headed back to Los Angeles about 4 p.m. Nov. 28, the day after Thanksgiving. Instead of taking their usual route down Interstate 15 into the basin, they headed across the winding Angeles Crest Highway that cuts through the San Gabriel Mountains.

"He had never driven that road before," Quiroz said. "I can only think that they wanted to show the kids the snow."

At 5:30 p.m., the Lechugas stopped on the highway to help a Victorville family with a flat tire, relatives discovered later.

That was the last time they were seen.

When Jose didn't show up for work Saturday, his brother and co-worker Manuel Lechuga became worried and alerted relatives. They began frantically calling others in

the extended family in Arizona, the Napa Valley and Mexico, daring to believe the missing ones had perhaps taken a trip without telling anyone.

"We just kept hoping they would show up," Quiroz said. "I can't believe they're gone. They were a part of us. We are just left with so many memories."

In the midst of their grief, family members said they are angry that the Los Angeles Police Department ignored their initial pleas for help when the Lechugas did not arrive home.

Relatives said that they tried to report the family's disappearance Dec. 4 but that an LAPD officer refused to take a report and told them to inform authorities in Victorville. The case was transferred Monday to the department's missing persons unit.

"We're angry because they didn't help us," said Edgar Lechuga, 18, a cousin. "If they started looking earlier, maybe they would have been saved."

Los Angeles Police Chief Bernard C. Parks has ordered an internal investigation into the family's complaint, said department spokesman Lt. Anthony Albia.

Relatives now say they wish they had known where to look.

"I just wish they could have known how hard we tried to find them," said Edgar Lechuga. "I wish they could have seen how far we went to bring them back."

U  
B  
at  
w  
t  
H  
la  
en  
m

12/11/97





**GTE****FACSIMILE**

DATE

12/5/97

Number of pages including cover sheet

TO:

DEPT. G.M.A.

Phone:

Fax Phone:

CC:

FROM:

ALAN DAVIS  
ALAN HOLZMAN  
NETWORK OPERATIONS

Phone:

Fax Phone: 805-872-9043

CC:

REMARKS:

☐ Urgent☐ For your review☐ Reply ASAP☐ Please Comment

REPORT FOR: 213-364-7238  
Serial No (in hex): hd4276ec1Time: 11/29/97 12:00 to 12/03/97 16:01  
Manf. Serial No.: m21202584257  
p12577224961

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339

CALL TYPE: Operator Assistant Call

REC:2 TO DN:0  
SID:228 DCS:0  
ICS: 28 IRDO: 5  
LCS: 28 LRDO: 5  
VC: D 11-29-97  
LAND: D 00-00-00  
3WAY: E 00000:00.0  
BTYP:0 RSIND:1  
SRFEAT:0 MSN:hd4276ec1CIDGT: HOF:0  
NIPTG:0 NIPTM:0  
PSCM:0 SCM:  
RCFI:No Failure Occurred  
T 13:08:58.4 E 00000:30.7  
T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
LSA: E 00000:00.0  
DCSDGT:  
BNUM:2133647238

SRTG:0 SRTM:0

ANSSTAT:Unanswered

CLOPER:Exchange Operator

TIMIND:

SERVFEAT:No Service Feature

OSEAIND:Zeros in the Called Number field. The oper. was the called no.

DIAL:APX Basic Routing

LSAIND:No LSA Voice Channel Timing

MRSTAT:

\*\*Message Recording Service Not Used\*\*

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339

CALL TYPE:Non-Toll Cellular-Orig. Call

REC:2 TO DN:0  
SID:228 DCS:0  
ICS: 28 IRDO: 5  
LCS: 28 LRDO: 5  
VC: D 11-29-97  
LAND: D 00-00-00  
3WAY: E 00000:00.0  
BTYP:0 RSIND:1  
SRFEAT:0 MSN:hd4276ec1CIDGT: HOF:0  
NIPTG:0 NIPTM:0  
PSCM:0 SCM:  
RCFI:Timed-out Mobile Unit Release  
T 13:12:46.0 E 00001:09.4  
T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
LSA: E 00000:00.0  
DCSDGT:  
BNUM:2133647238

SRTG:0 SRTM:0

ANSSTAT:Unanswered

CLOPER:No Operator involved

TIMIND:

Charge Guard

SERVFEAT:No Service Feature

OSEAIND:Not An Overseas Call (NPA not dialed)

DIAL:APX Basic Routing

LSAIND:No LSA Voice Channel Timing

MRSTAT:

\*\*Message Recording Service Not Used\*\*

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339

CALL TYPE:Non-Toll Cellular-Orig. Call

REC:2 TO DN:70622451340  
SID:228 DCS:0  
ICS: 28 IRDO: 3  
LCS: 28 LRDO: 3  
VC: D 11-29-97  
LAND: D 00-00-00  
3WAY: E 00000:00.0  
BTYP:0 RSIND:1  
SRFEAT:0 MSN:hd4276ec1CIDGT: HOF:0  
NIPTG:0 NIPTM:0  
PSCM:0 SCM:  
RCFI:No Failure Occurred  
T 13:14:21.5 E 00000:44.5  
T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
LSA: E 00000:00.0  
DCSDGT:  
BNUM:2133647238

SRTG:0 SRTM:0

ANSSTAT:Unanswered

CLOPER:No Operator involved

VICTORVILLE POLICE

DATA

\*\*Message Recording Service Not Used\*\*

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339 CALL TYPE: Toll Cellular-Originated Call  
 REC: 5 TO DN: 7062451340 CIDGT: HOF: 0  
 SID: 228 DCS: 0 NIPTG: 0 NIPTM: 0  
 ICS: 28 IRDD: 3 PSCM: 0 SCM: 0  
 LCS: 28 LRDD: 3 RCFI: Timed-out Mobile Unit Release  
 VC: D 11-29-97 T 13:16:28.1 E 00000:59.0  
 LAND: D 00-00-00 T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
 3WAY: E 00000:00.0 LSA: E 00000:00.0  
 BTYP: 0 RSIND: 1 DCSDGT: 0  
 SRFEAT: 0 MSN: ind4276ec1 BNUM: 2133647238  
 SRTG: 0 SRTM: 0 ANSSTAT: Unanswered

CLOPER: No Operator Involved

TIMIND: Charge Guard

SERVFEAT: No Service Feature

OSEAIND: Not An Overseas Call (NPA dialed)

DIAL: APX Basic Routing

LSAIND: No LSA Voice Channel Timing

MRSTAT:

\*\*Message Recording Service Not Used\*\*

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339 CALL TYPE: Non-Toll Cellular-Orig. Call  
 REC: 5 TO DN: 2451340 CIDGT: HOF: 0  
 SID: 228 DCS: 0 NIPTG: 0 NIPTM: 0  
 ICS: 28 IRDD: 3 PSCM: 0 SCM: 0  
 LCS: 28 LRDD: 3 RCFI: Timed-out Mobile Unit Release  
 VC: D 11-29-97 T 13:17:33.8 E 00001:07.4  
 LAND: D 00-00-00 T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
 3WAY: E 00000:00.0 LSA: E 00000:00.0  
 BTYP: 0 RSIND: 1 DCSDGT: 0  
 SRFEAT: 0 MSN: ind4276ec1 BNUM: 2133647238  
 SRTG: 0 SRTM: 0 ANSSTAT: Unanswered  
 CLOPER: No Operator Involved  
 TIMIND:

Charge Guard

SERVFEAT: No Service Feature

OSEAIND: Not An Overseas Call (NPA not dialed)

DIAL: APX Basic Routing

LSAIND: No LSA Voice Channel Timing

MRSTAT:

\*\*Message Recording Service Not Used\*\*

STRUCTURE CODE: 1339 CALL TYPE: Non-Toll Cellular-Orig. Call  
 REC: 6 TO DN: 1911 CIDGT: HOF: 0  
 SID: 228 DCS: 0 NIPTG: 0 NIPTM: 0  
 ICS: 28 IRDD: 8 PSCM: 0 SCM: 0  
 LCS: 28 LRDD: 8 RCFI: No Failure Occurred  
 VC: D 11-29-97 T 13:20:15.1 E 00000:19.7  
 LAND: D 00-00-00 T 00:00:00.0 E 00000:00.0  
 3WAY: E 00000:00.0 LSA: E 00000:00.0  
 BTYP: 0 RSIND: 1 DCSDGT: 0  
 SRFEAT: 0 MSN: ind4276ec1 BNUM: 2133647238  
 SRTG: 0 SRTM: 0 ANSSTAT: Unanswered  
 CLOPER: No Operator Involved  
 TIMIND:

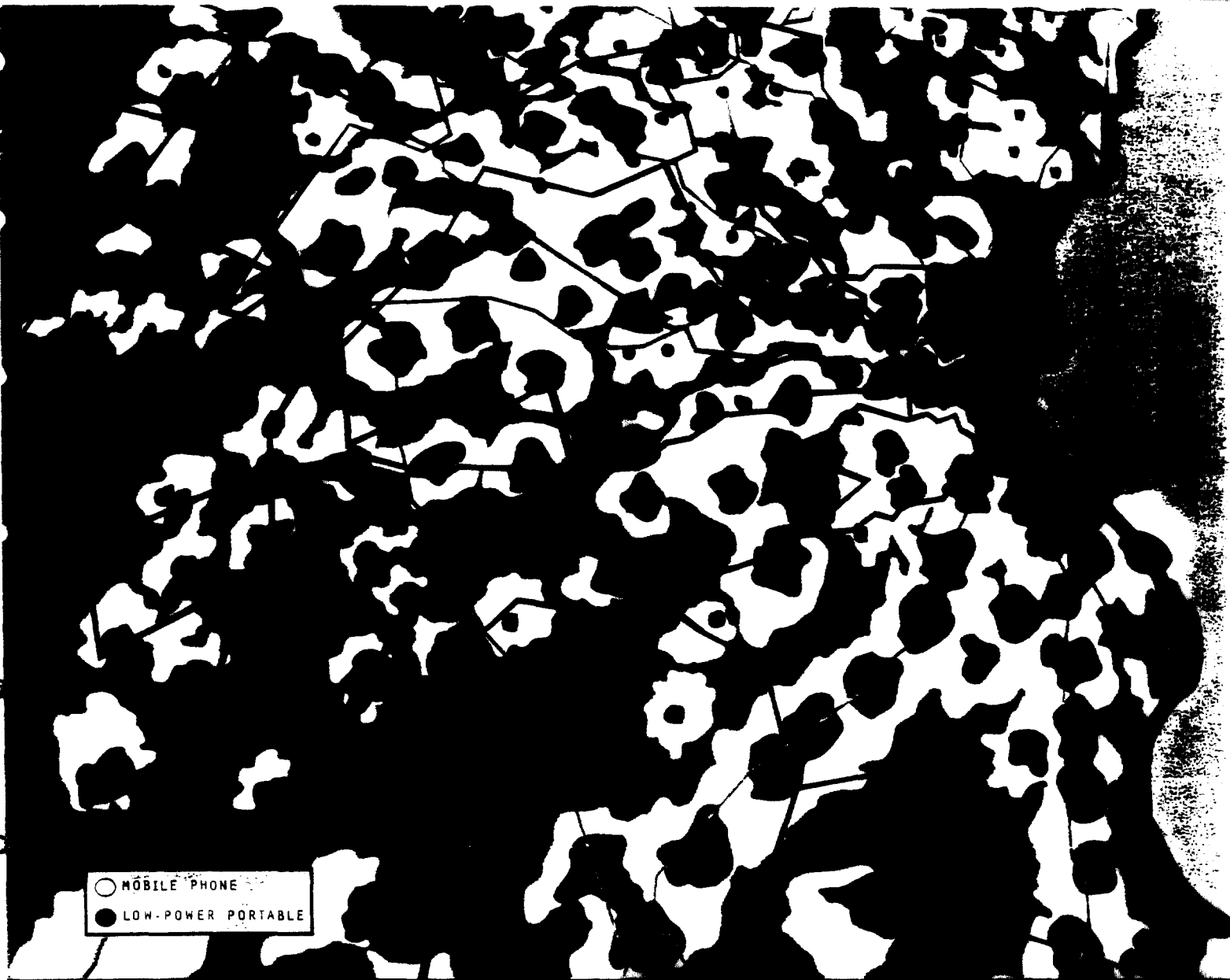
SERVFEAT: No Service Feature

OSEAIND: Not An Overseas Call (NPA not dialed)

DIAL: APX Basic Routing

LSAIND: No LSA Voice Channel Timing





○ MOBILE PHONE  
● LOW-POWER PORTABLE

GET RID OF THAT DIRTY LITTLE SECRET IN YOUR DESK DRAWER. You know — the “coverage gap

map.” LEAVE THINGS UP TO THE SUPERFILTER.

GET RID OF THAT DIRTY LITTLE SECRET IN YOUR DESK DRAWER. You know — the “coverage gap map.” It’s the map you check when you get persistent complaints about static and dropped calls in a specific area. Now there’s a way to CLOSE COVERAGE GAPS without the major expense of adding new cell sites: Superconductor Technologies’

**SUPERFILTER™**  
ADVANCED WIRELESS SOLUTIONS

SuperFilter.™ In customer field results, SuperFilter has expanded portable cellular coverage MORE THAN 60%. And as your call quality improves, so does customer minutes of use.

So stop catching static — find out how the proven, practical, compact SuperFilter can benefit you

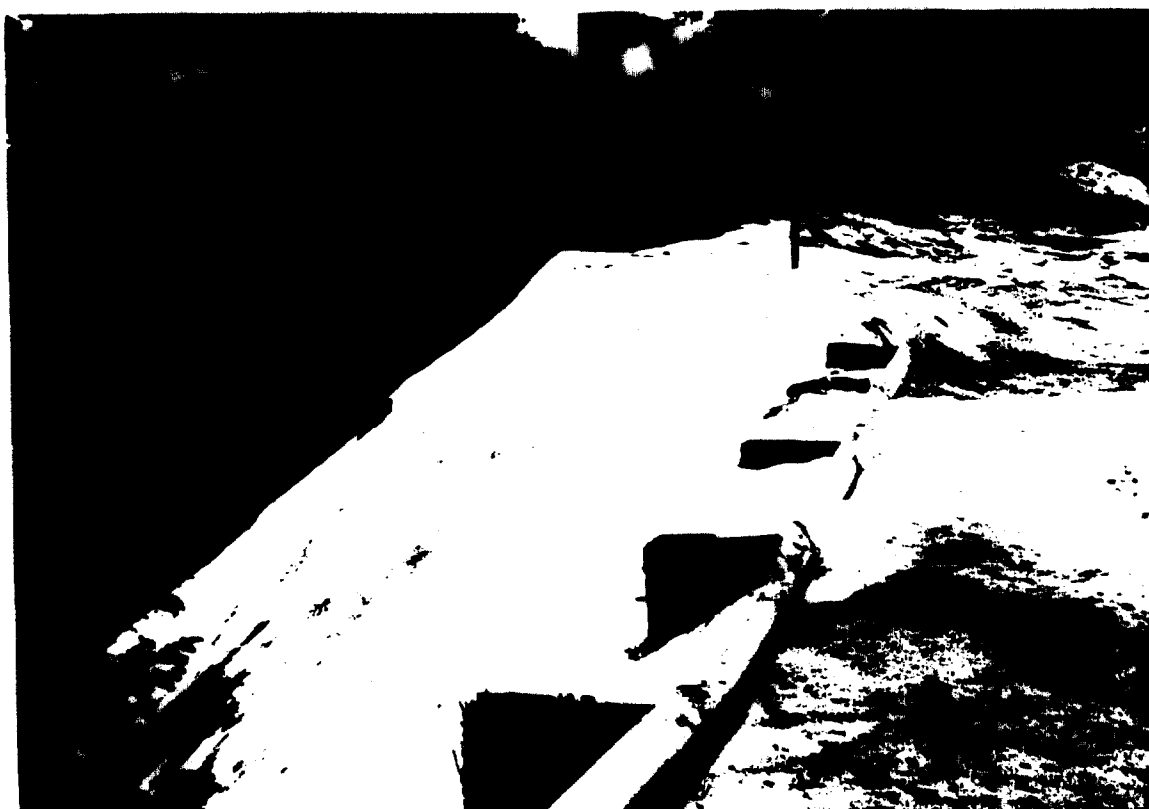
IN ACTUAL DOLLARS. Call 800-727-3648 extension 723, or visit us at [www.suptech.com](http://www.suptech.com).

 **SUPERCONDUCTOR TECHNOLOGIES**  
ADVANCED WIRELESS SOLUTIONS





Looking North Across the Antelope Valley  
From the Angeles Crest Highway



The Place Where The Lechuga Vehicle  
Went Over The Edge Of The Road



**The Point Where The Lechuga Vehicle Came To Rest**



**The View Looking Up Towards the Accident Site**



